Vol. XXXV No. 3 October 2000

FOREST PEST REPORTER

Division of Plant Industry PO Box 330 Trenton, NJ 08625-0330 609-292-5440

LATE SUMMER DEFOLIATORS HIT OCEAN AND ATLANTIC COUNTIES

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Variable Oakleaf Caterpillars Cause First Major Defoliation in Forty Years

Complaints about severe defoliation of oak along the Garden State Parkway and around homes near Barnegat in Ocean County prompted the Division to investigate an outbreak of what appears to be variable oakleaf caterpillars, *Heterocampa manteo*. This was the first time the pest has been observed causing damage in New Jersey in four decades.

With the assistance of a Forest Fire Service helicopter provided by the NJDEP, Bureau of Forestry, Division staff conducted an aerial sketch mapping survey to delineate the defoliated area. A total of 595 acres of severe defoliation was mapped in three areas of Ocean County; 435 acres of 75 - 100 percent defoliation was mapped in Union Township, 110 acres of defoliation was mapped in Stafford Township and 50 acres of defoliation was found in Eagleswood Township.

Since the caterpillars completed their feeding by August 15, shortly after the problem was reported, no spray recommendations were given. Late season defoliation by the caterpillars is unlikely to lead to tree loss. Homeowners were advised to watch for the pest next July when they deposit their eggs on the foliage and to treat their trees when the caterpillars are less than one-half inch in size.

Orange-striped Oakworm Crops Up Again in Atlantic and Ocean Counties

During mid-September the Division received numerous complaints from homeowners regarding defoliated oak trees and migrating caterpillars which were identified as orange-striped oakworm, *Anisota senatoria*. Homeowners thought gypsy moths were causing the defoliation.

Field inspections showed the heaviest infestations, involving thousands of acres, were in Lacey and Stafford Townships in Ocean County and in Galloway and

Egg Harbor Townships in Atlantic County.

Late season defoliation by oakworms rarely leads to tree loss. Homeowners wanting to reduce the larval nuisance were advised to apply insecticides as long as caterpillars are present or wait until the third week in September when the caterpillars enter the soil and no longer present a problem.

The greatest threat from late summer defoliators is the increased fire danger caused by the open forest canopies which contribute to drying out of the forest floor. In dry years the threat can be significant; however, minimal impact is expected this year due to abundant rainfall.

Requests for Gypsy Moth Egg Mass Surveys Increase Dramatically

This year's gypsy moth aerial defoliation survey revealed over 132,000 acres of defoliation, the majority of which was in the northern counties of the state. The Division notified Administrators of over 90 affected municipalities of gypsy moth defoliation within their borders and, to date, 84 municipalities have requested egg mass surveys compared to only 10 municipalities last year.

The egg counts are conducted to determine which forested communities will be recommended for aerial spraying with *Bacillus thuringiensis,(B.t.),* next spring. Department inspectors have already begun the egg mass surveys and it is expected that they will be completed by early December.

Bagworms and Leafhoppers Most Serious Nursery Pests in Hunterdon County

Nursery inspections conducted in Hunterdon County during the spring and summer months showed bagworms and leafhoppers to be major problems for the nurserymen.

The bagworm, *Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis,* was most commonly found causing defoliation of Douglas fir, blue spruce, cedar, white pine and norway spruce.

Due to the wet summer weather, many of the maples, oaks, and redbuds put out a second flush of foliage which came under heavy attack by the potato leafhopper, *Empoasca fabae*, in late July. This feeding resulted in reduced internodal length causing severe stunting of growth, extensive foliage damage and multiple tops.

Other pests observed causing damage to nurseries in Hunterdon County were aphids (*Aphididae*) on gray and river birches; Eastern tent caterpillar (*Malacosoma americanum*) on cherry and crabapple; Fletcher scale (*Parthenolecanium fletcheri*) on yews; redheaded pine sawfly (*Neodiprion lecontei*) on Japanese black pine; European pine sawfly (*Neodiprion sertifer*) on scotch pine; black vine weevil (*Otiorhychus sulcatus*) on rhododendron; azalea lace bug *(Stephanitis pyriodes*) on azalea; and globose scale (*Sphaerolecanium prunastri*) on purple plum.

Appropriate control recommendations were successfully implemented by the nurserymen.

Prepared by John D. Kegg, Chief, Bureau of Plant Pest and Disease Control, D.P.I., NJDA